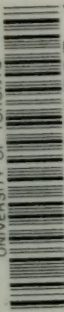


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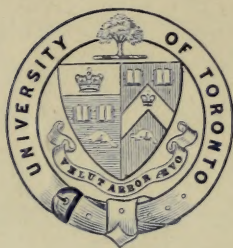
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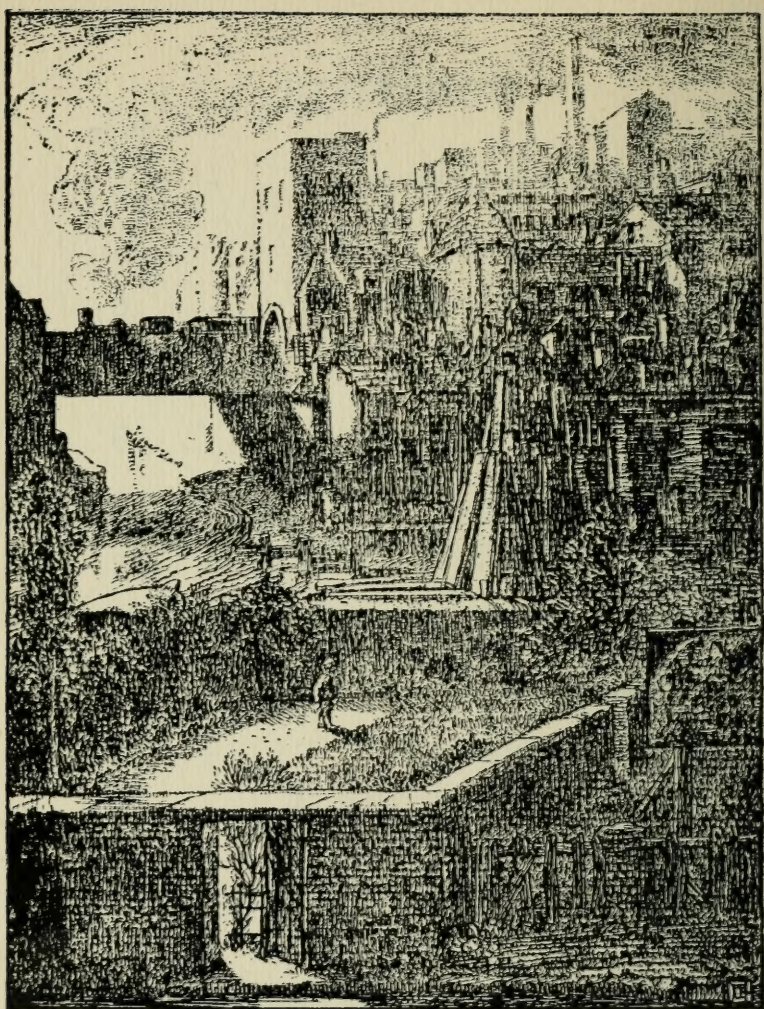
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TO
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MEMORIES OF CHILDHOOD

CHILDHOOD CALLS

Come over, come over the deepening river,
Come over again the dark torrent of years,
Come over, come back where the green leaves
quiver,
And the lilac still blooms and the gray sky
clears.

Come, come back to the everlasting garden,
To that green heaven, and the blue heaven
above.

Come back to the time when time brought no
burden,
And love was unconscious, knowing not love.

THE ANSWER

O, my feet have worn a track
Deep and old in going back.
Thought released turns to its home
As bees through tangling thickets come.
One way of thought leads to the vast
Desert of the mind, and there is lost,
But backward leads to a dancing light
And myself there, stiff with delight.

O, well my thought has trodden a way
From this brief day to that long day.

THE FIRST HOUSE

That is the earliest thing that I remember—
The narrow house in the long narrow street,
Dark rooms within and darkness out of doors
Where grasses in the garden lift in the wind,
Long grasses clinging round unsteady feet.
The sunlight through one narrow passage
pours,
As through the keyhole into a dusty room,
Striking with a golden rod the greening gloom.
The tall, tall timber-stacks have yet been kind,
Letting the sun fling his rod clear between
Lest there should be no gold upon the green,
And no light then for a child to dream upon
And day be of day's brightness all forlorn.
I saw those timber piles first dark and tall,
And then men clambered up, and stumbled
down
Each with a heavy and long timber borne
Upon broad shoulders, leather-covered, bent.
Hour after hour, day after day they went
Until the piles were gone and a new sky
Stretched high and white above the garden wall.
And then fresh piles crept slowly up and up,
The strong men staggering, more cruelly
bowed,

Till at last they lay idle on the top
Looking down from their height on things so
small,
While I looked wondering and fearful up
At the strong men at rest on the new-built
cloud.

But there was other gold than the sun's
sparse gold—

Florence's hair, its brightness lying still
Upon my mind as then upon the grass.
Now the grass covers it and I am old,
Remembering but her hair and that long grass,
And the great wood-stacks threatening to fall--
When all dark things will.

THE OTHER HOUSE

That other house, in the same crowded street,
One red-tiled floor had, answering to my feet,
And a bewildering garden all of light and heat.

Only that red floor and garden now remain,
One glowing fire-like in my glowing brain,
One with smell, colour, sun and cloud revived
again.

Yet in the garden the sky was very small,
Closed by some darkness beyond the low brown
wall;

But from the west the gold could long unhindered fall.

Of human faces I remember none
Amid the garden; but myself alone
With creeping-jenny, sunflower, marigold,
snapdragon——

These all my love, these now all my light,
Bringing their kindness to any painful night.
The sun brushed all their brightness with his
skirt more bright.

And I was happy when I knew it not,
Dreaming of nothing more than that small plot,
And the high sky and sun that floated bright
and hot.

But what night was, save dark, I did not know.
The blind shut out the stars: the moon would
go
Staring, unstared at, moon and stars unnoted
flow.

Until one night, into the strange street led,
To stare at a strange light from the Factory
shed,
Wheeling and darting, withdrawn, and sudden
again outsped——

No one knew why—but I knew darkness then,
And saw the stars that hung so still; but when
I lay abed the old starless dark came back again.

Night is not night without the stars and moon.
I knew them not, or I forgot too soon,
And now remember only the glowing sun of
noon,

The red floor and yellow flowers, and a lonely
child,
And a whistle morn and noon and evening
shrilled,
And darkness when the household murmurs
even were stilled.

THE FIRE

Near the house flowed, or paused, the black
Canal,

Edged by the timber piles so black and tall.

From the rotten fence I watched the horses
pull

Along the footpath, slow and beautiful,

Moving with strength and ease, in their great
size

And untired movement wonderful to my eyes;
Their dull brass clanking as each shaggy foot
Stamped the soft cinder track as fine as soot.

The driver lurched old and forbidding by,
Not seeing the child that feared to meet his eye.
I watched the rope dip, tighten, and the water
flash

In falling, and then heard the hiss and splash;
I watched the barge drag slowly on and on,
Not dreaming how lovely a ship could ride the
water upon,

Not dreaming how lovely flowing water was,
Sung to by trees and fingered by long grass,
Or running from the bosom of a hill

Down, where it flows so deep that it seems
still.

But it was by that rotten fence one night
I saw the timber piles break into light,
Suddenly leaping into a heavenly flame
That played with the wind and one with the
wind became

Pile to pile gave its fire, till they were like
Bright angels with flashing swords before they
strike,

Terrible and lovely. But men those angels
fought,

Small and humble and patient all night
wrought,

And all day wrought and night and day again,

And night and day, pouring their hissing rain,
Until the angels tired and one by one died.
Then their black spectres haunted the water-
side,
Charred ruins, broken-limbed, no more erect,
Or heaped black dust, with cold white ashes
flecked.
But I had seen the angel-quelling men
With blackened and bruised face, the horses
thin,
The glittering harness, the leaky bubbling
mains,
The broad smoke, and the steam from the
leaping rains:
O, I had seen what I should not forget,
Men that defeated ruinous angels and shall
still defeat.

THE KITE

It was a day
All blue and lifting white,
When I went into the fields with Frank
To fly his kite.

The fields were aged, bare,
Shut between houses everywhere.
All the way there
The wind tugged at the kite to take it

Untethered, toss and break it;
But Frank held fast, and I
Walked with him admiringly;
In his light brave and fine
How bright was mine!

We tailed the kite
While the wind flapped its purple face
And yellow head.
Frank's yellow head
Was scarcely higher, and not so bright.
"Let go!" he cried, and I let go
And watched the kite
Swaying and rising so
That I was rooted to the place
Watching the kite
Rise into the blue,
Lifting its head against the white,
Against the sun,
Against the height
That far-off, farther drew;
Shivering there
In that fine air
As we below shivered with delight
And fear.

There it floated
Among the birds and clouds at ease,

Of others all unnoted,
Swimming above the ranked stiff trees.
And I lay down, looking up at the sky,
The clouds and birds that floated
By others still unnoted,
And that swaying kite
Specking the light :
Looking up at the sky,
The birds and clouds that drew
Nearer, leaving the blue,
Stooping, and then brushing me,
With such tenderness touching me
That I had still lain there
In those fields bare,
Forgetting the kite ;
For every cloud was now a kite
Streaming with light.

THE CHAIR

The chair was made
By hands long dead,
Polished by many bodies sitting there,
Until the wood-lines flowed as clean as waves.
Mine sat restless there,
Or propped to stare,
Hugged the low kitchen with fond eyes
Or tired eyes that looked at nothing at all.

Or watched from the smoke rise
The flame's snake-eyes,
Up the black-bearded chimney leap;
Then on my shoulder my dull head would
drop.

And half asleep
I heard her creep—
Her never-singing lips shut fast,
Fearing to wake me by a careless breath.

Then at last,
My lids upcast,
Our eyes met, I smiled and she smiled,
And I shut mine again and truly slept.

Was I that child
Fretful, sick, wild?
Was that you moving soft and soft,
Between the rooms if I but played at sleep?

Or if I laughed,
Talked, cried, or coughed,
You smiled too, just perceptibly,
Or your large kind brown eyes said, O poor
boy!

From the fireside I
Could see the narrow sky

Through the barred heavy window panes,
Could hear the sparrows quarrelling round
the lilac;

And hear the heavy rains
Choking the roof-drains:-
Else of the world I nothing heard
Or nothing remember now. But most I loved
To watch when you stirred
Busily like a bird
At household doings; with hands floured
Mixing a magic with your cakes and tarts.

O into me, sick, froward,
Yourself you poured;
In all those days and weeks when I
Sat, slept, woke, whimpered, wondered and
slept again.

Now but a memory
To bless and harry me
Remains of you still swathed with care;
Myself your chief care, sitting by the hearth
Propped in the pillowed chair,
Following you with tired stare,
And my hand following the wood lines
By dead hands smoothed and followed many
years.

THE SWING

It was like floating in a blessed dream to roam
Across green meadows, far from home,
With only trees and quivering sky to hedge
the sight,

Dazzling the eyes with strange delight.
Such wide wide fields I had never seen, and
never dreamed

Could be: and wonderful it seemed
To wander over green and under green and
run

Unwatched even of the shining sun.

One tree there was that held a wrinkled creak-
ing bough

Far over the grass, hanging low;
And a swing from it hanging drew us near and
made

New brightness beneath that doming shade.
For there my sisters swung long hours de-
lightedly,

And there delighted clambered I;
And all our voices shrilled as one when up we
flung

And into the stinging sharp leaves swung.
Then in a garden dense with bramble and
sweet flowers,

Where honeysuckle a new sweetness pours,
We sat and ate and drank. Well I remember
how
We were all shaded by one bough
Bending with red fruit over our uplifted eyes,
Teasing our well-watched covetousness.
And then we went back happy to the empty
swing,
But I was tired of everything
Except the grass and trees and the wide
shadows there .
Widening slowly everywhere.
It was like swinging in a solemn dream to roam
In a strange air, far from home--
Until I saw the shadows suddenly wake and
move,
And float, float down from above.
Then I ran quickly back, round the large
gloomy trees,
O with what shivering unease!
And stumbled where they waited and was far
too glad,
Finding them, to be afraid or sad.
--Then waited an unforgetting year once more
to see
So wide a sky, so great a tree.

FEAR.

Surely I must have ailed
 On that dark night,
Or my childish courage failed
 Because there was no light;
Or terror must have come
 With his chill wing,
And made my angel dumb,
 Or found him slumbering.
Because I could not sleep
 Terror began to wake,
Close at my side to creep
 And sting me like a snake.
And I was afraid of death,
 But when I thought of pain--
O, language no word hath
 To recall that thought again!
Into my heart fear crawled
 And wreathed close around,
Mortal, convulsive, cold,
 And I lay bound.
Fear set before my eyes
 Unimaginable pain;
Approaching agonies
 Sprang nimbly into my brain.
Just as a thrilling wind

Plucks every mournful wire,
So terror on my wild mind
 Fingered with ice and fire.
O, not death I feared
 But the anguish of the body;
My dizzying passions heard,
 Saw my own bosom bloody.
I thought of years of woe,
 Moments prolonged to years,
Heard my heart racing so,
 Redoubling all those fears.
Yet still I could not cry,
 Not a sound the stillness broke;
But the dark stirred, and my
 Negligent angel woke.

THE STREETS.

Marlboro' and Waterloo and Trafalgar,
Tuileries, Talavera, Valenciennes,
Were strange names all, and all familiar;
For down their streets I went, early and late
(Is there a street where I have never been
Of all those hundreds, narrow, skyless,
straight?)--

Early and late, they were my woods and
meadows;

The rain upon their dust my summer smell;
Their scant herb and brown sparrows and
harsh shadows

Were all my spring. Was there another
spring?

I knew their noisy desolation well,
Drinking it up as a child drinks everything,
Knowing no other world than brick and
stone,
With one rich memory of the earth all bright.
Now all is fallen into oblivion--

All that I was, in years of school and play,
Things that I hated, things that were delight,
All are forgotten, or shut all away

Behind a creaking door that opens slow.
But there's a child that walks those streets of
war,
Hearing his running footsteps as they go
Echoed from house to house, and wondering
At Marlboro', Waterloo and Trafalgar;
And at night, when the yellow gas lamps fling
Unsteady shadows, singing for company;
Yet loving the lighted dark, and any star
Caught by sharp roofs in a narrow net of sky.

WHEN CHILDHOOD DIED.

I can recall the day
 When childhood died.
I had grown thin and tall
 And eager-eyed.

Such a false happiness
 Had seized me then;
A child, I saw myself
 Man among men.

Now I see that I was
 Ignorant, dazed,
As one for the surgeon's knife
 Anæsthetised.

So that I did not know
 What loomed before,
Nor how, a child, I became
 A child no more.

The world's sharpened knife
 Cut round my heart;
Then something was taken
 And flung apart.

I did not, could not know
 What had been done.
Under some evil drug
 I lived as one

At home in the seeming world;
Then slowly came
Through years and years to myself
And was no more the same.

I know now an ill thing was done
To a young child
By the world's wary knife
Maimed and defiled.

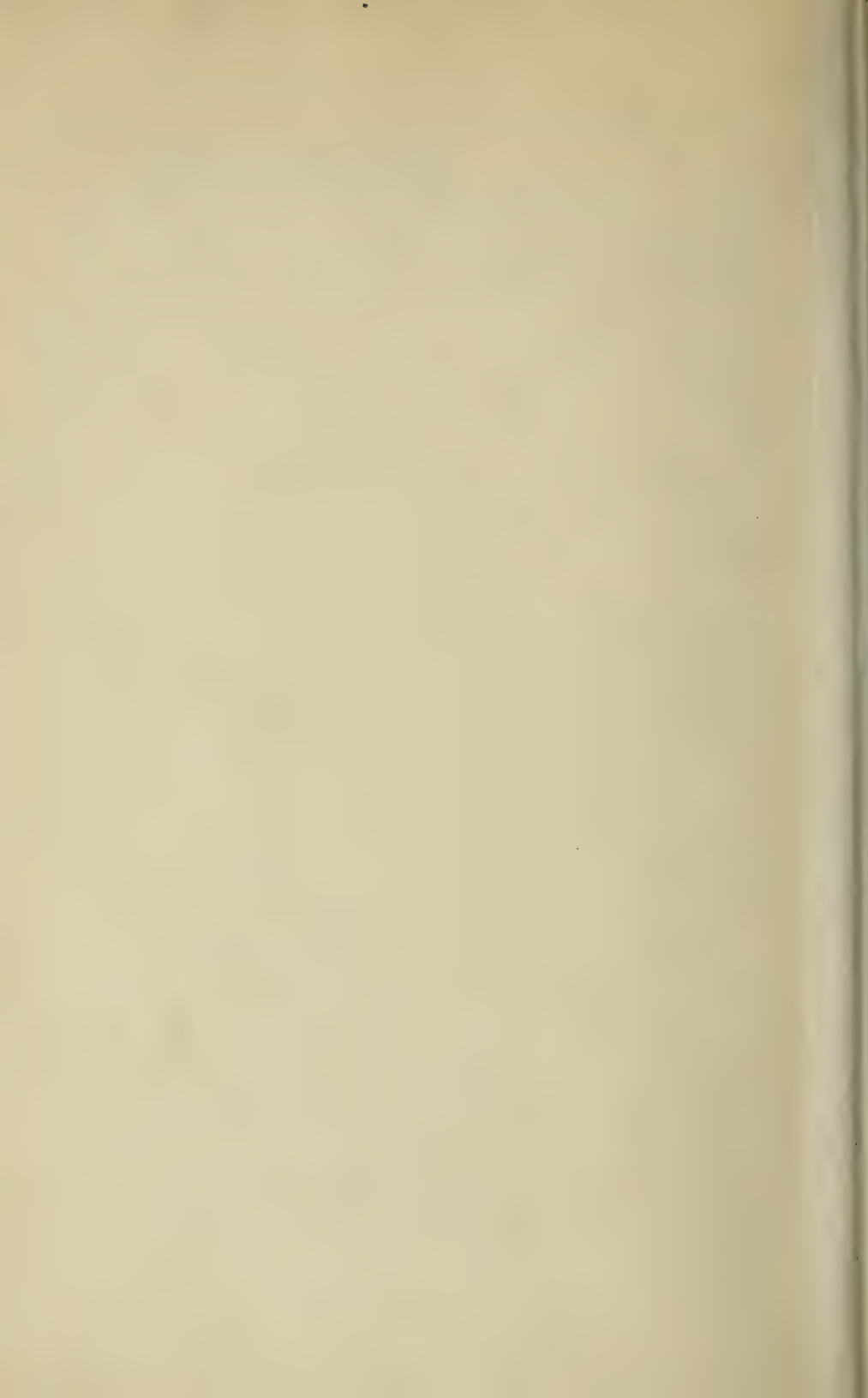
I can recall the day
Almost without anger or pain,
When childhood did not die
But was slain.

ALL THAT I WAS I AM.

Hateful it seems now, yet was I not happy?
Starved of the things I love, I did not know
I loved them, and was happy lacking them.
If bitterness comes now (and that is hell)
It is when I forget that I was happy,
Accusing Fate, that sits and nods and laughs,
Because I was not born a bird or tree.
Let accusation sleep, lest God's own finger
Point angry from the cloud in which He hides.
Who may regret what was, since it has made
Himself himself? All that I was I am,
And the old childish joy now lives in me
At sight of a green field or a green tree.

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MEMORIAM EDWARD THOMAS
CONTAINING POEMS AND OTHER
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